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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 63rd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MUNTASSER (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 107: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1992-1993 (continued)

Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/46/L.57/Rev.1 concerning agenda item 137

OTHER MATTERS

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The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 107: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1992-1993 (continued)

Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/46/L.57/Rev.1 concerning agenda item 137 (A/C.5/46/83)

1. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Advisory Committee had considered the statement of programme budget implications of draft resolution A/46/L.57/Rev.1, contained in document A/C.5/46/83. Implementation of the draft resolution, the revised text of which contained no substantive changes, would entail three major changes to existing bodies.

2. The first would be to transform the Intergovernmental Committee on Science and Technology for Development and its subsidiary body, the Advisory Committee on Science and Technology for Development (ACAST), into one functional commission of the Economic and Social Council. The new commission, which would be named the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, would comprise 53 members and would meet for two weeks every other year. The United Nations would pay the travel expenses of one representative of each of the Member States participating in the new Commission. In that connection, the Advisory Committee noted that the travel costs for a session to be held during the biennium 1992-1993 were estimated at $175,000.

3. The Advisory Committee on Science and Technology for Development would not meet in 1992-1993. Instead of the one-week meeting scheduled to be held in Burundi in May 1992, the Secretariat intended to hold an ad hoc expert meeting in May 1992, also in Burundi. That meeting, which was expected to cost less than the original ACAST meeting, would be financed from the provisions of section 18 of the programme budget for 1992-1993, including, if necessary, through a redeployment of resources from within the section. The actual cost would be reported to the General Assembly in the context of the first budget performance reform for 1992-1993.

4. The Advisory Committee noted from the draft resolution that the new Commission would examine at its first session the funding arrangements and the modalities for the convening of ad hoc panels/workshops which would meet intersessionally. As indicated in paragraph 8 of document A/C.5/46/83, the estimated requirements for the Commission in 1992-1993 did not include any possible provision for such meetings. ACABQ was of the view that any expenditure in that regard should be reported to the General Assembly in the context of the performance report for the current biennium.

5. The second change called for in the draft resolution concerned a restructuring of the Committee on Natural Resources, which currently comprised 54 members who were representatives of Governments. Under the terms of the

(Mr. Mselle)

draft resolution, the restructured Committee on Natural Resources would comprise 24 government-nominated experts acting in their personal capacities. The United Nations would pay travel expenses and a daily subsistence allowance, an amount estimated at $147,000 for the biennium, for each member of the Committee.

6. The third change called for in the draft resolution entailed transforming the Committee on the Development and Utilization of New and Renewable Sources of Energy, comprising government representatives of all Member States, into the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development, composed of 24 government-nominated experts acting in their personal capacities. Those members would be entitled to the payment of travel expenses and daily subsistence allowances. The new Committee would assume the responsibilities for energy issues currently included in the mandate of the Committee on Natural Resources, and would next meet in the biennium 1994-1995.

7. In paragraph 6 of the statement of programme budget implications, the Secretary-General indicated that the conference-servicing costs relating to the session of the new Commission on Science and Technology for Development and the restructured Committee on Natural Resources would amount to $992,000. Those costs would be met from within the existing appropriation under section 32 of the programme budget. Should the General Assembly adopt the draft resolution, the changes to the appropriation would be reported on in the context of the first performance report for the current biennium. The Advisory Committee had no objection to such a course of action. At the same time, however, it reiterated its previously stated view that outstanding issues remained with regard to removing inconsistencies in the payment of subsistence allowances to members of certain organs and subsidiary bodies. Accordingly, as stated in its report (A/46/748), the Advisory Committee, upon receipt of the requested review and evaluation of the current rules and procedures for the payment of travel expenses and subsistence allowances by the Organization, would submit its related observations and recommendations thereon to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session.

8. The Committee was recommending that the Fifth Committee should inform the General Assembly that, should it adopt draft resolution A/46/L.57/Rev.1, additional requirements under section 14 amounting to $147,000 would be required and that savings amounting to $231,000 were estimated under section 18. Furthermore, it should be noted that it was the Secretary-General's intention to deal with those changes in the context of the first performance report for the biennium 1992-1993.

9. Mr. RAE (India) observed that the General Assembly had in resolution 46/185 stressed the importance for developing countries of the activities under section 18 of the programme budget. Concern had been expressed there at the negative growth proposed for section 18. The statement before the Committee of the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/46/L.57/Rev.1 indicated that there would apparently be a further reduction

(Mr. Rae, India)

of $231,000. The programme budget had included an appropriation for the travel and subsistence costs for experts of the subsidiary bodies of the Intergovernmental Committee on Science and Technology for Development, while the statement submitted by the Secretary-General included provisions for the new functional Commission but not for the ad hoc panels/workshops that would meet intersessionally. Since, according to the draft resolution, those ad hoc panels/workshops had to meet, funds had to be provided for them; but if that was done, the savings mentioned could not be achieved. Some clarification seem to be in order.

10. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) said that draft resolution A/46/L.57/Rev.1 was a positive first step towards compliance with General Assembly resolution 41/213 of 19 December 1986 on the restructuring of the Economic and Social Council, but he regretted that more progress had not been made in the intervening time. Regarding the funding of the intersessional ad hoc panels/workshops of the new Commission on Science and Technology for Development, he shared the concern expressed by the representative of India. As to the ad hoc expert meeting to be held in Burundi, he wondered if the authority existed to finance it from the regular budget.

11. Mr. CLAVIJO (Colombia) said that he too shared the concern expressed by the representative of India. When the programme budget had been adopted, the need for full implementation of the science and technology programmes had been stressed. The changes provided for in draft resolution A/46/L.57/Rev.1 were formal rather than substantive changes. Even though the Advisory Committee on Science and Technology for Development was being dissolved, work would have to continue between the sessions of the functional Commission. If the figures given were any indication, it was difficult to understand the justification for the reductions provided for in section 18. Intersessional activities had to be funded from the resources allocated for the purpose in the programme budget. The new Department of Economic and Social Development ought to make specific proposals for interim arrangements governing intersessional activities before the first session of the new functional Commission, when the question of funding arrangements and the modalities for the convening of the intersessional ad hoc panels/workshops would be examined.

12. Mr. SCHONLEITER (Germany) said that during the negotiations on draft resolution A/46/L.57/Rev.1 it had been agreed that the measures stipulated would not affect total expenditures. The statement on the programme budget implications indicated additional requirements of $147,000 in section 14 and savings of $231,000 in section 18, but no consideration was given to the consequences of restructuring the Committee on the Development and Utilization of New and Renewable Sources of Energy, since it was expected that the Committee would meet during the 1994-1995 biennium. As in the case of the restructured Committee on Natural Resources, it would have to be assumed that the additional requirements for travel and subsistence costs for the members of the new Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development would amount to approximately $147,000. That would mean a net increase in total expenditures.

13. Mr. CARDOSO (Brazil) said that his delegation supported the comments of the representatives of India and Colombia. Brazil had favoured the adoption of draft resolution A/46/L.57/Rev.1 as part of the process of restructuring and revitalizing the United Nations in the economic and social and related spheres. For that process to be effective, there must be full compliance with all existing mandates. The General Assembly had just recognized that need in the area specifically of science and technology in resolution 46/185, adopted during the current session. The annex to draft resolution A/46/L.57/Rev.1 referred to the possibility that the future Commission on Science and Technology for Development would continue the practice of the Advisory Committee on Science and Technology for Development, although it was of course not excluded that the Commission might institute other arrangements to obtain the input its work required. Bearing those two points in mind, namely, compliance with current mandates and the decisions to be taken by the new Commission at its first session, his delegation believed that the current appropriations should be maintained until the Commission adopted its decisions and until the redistribution of the funds needed for the fulfilment of mandates in the field of science and technology was completed.

14. Mr. INOMATA (Japan) said that his delegation fully supported the comments made by the Chairman of the Advisory Committee concerning the payment of the travel and related costs of representatives at United Nations meetings. Document A/C.5/46/83 indicated that the United Nations paid the costs of members of functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council. His delegation wondered if it was advisable for the Organization to pay such costs across the board, without regard for the criteria applied in appointing commission members or any arrangements the Secretary-General might make with the Member States. A case in point was the new Commission for Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice: although the Fifth Committee had not approved the additional appropriations proposed by the Secretary-General in his statement of financial implications (A/C.5/46/76), it appeared that the United Nations would be paying the travel costs of representatives to that functional Commission for the session to be held in Vienna from 21 to 30 April 1992.

15. His delegation recalled the recommendations of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations, which the General Assembly had endorsed in resolution 41/213. In Japan's view, the payment of travel costs for United Nations meetings should be restricted to the representatives of the least developed countries. In any case, the review of the current rules and procedures in that respect, to which the Chairman of the Advisory Committee had referred, was under way and was expected to be concluded by the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session. Japan proposed, specifically, that the Committee should endorse the arrangements described by the Advisory Committee regarding the review of the payment of travel expenses and subsistence allowances, as a follow-up to section IX of General Assembly resolution 43/217.

16. Mr. ETUKET (Uganda) said that his delegation shared the concerns expressed by the representatives of India, Colombia and Brazil. The Chairman of the Advisory Committee had indicated in his remarks that it endorsed the Secretary-General's recommendation in document A/C.5/46/83 to reduce the appropriation under section 18 of the programme budget by $231,000. If additional funds should be required, including funds for the meeting to be held in May in Burundi, the funds in question would be provided through a redeployment of resources within section 18 of the programme budget. His delegation attached great importance to the work that would be done at the Burundi meeting and consequently supported its financing from the regular budget. As other speakers had pointed out, at the current stage, when it was not clear how scheduled activities would be funded, including the Burundi meeting, it was perhaps not prudent for the General Assembly to authorize a reduction under section 18.

17. Furthermore, it was not clear to his delegation that there was a direct link between the new Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development and the Committee on Natural Resources. His delegation was not aware of any mandate providing that the new Committee should meet during the biennium 1994-1995 and not during the current biennium. Such a decision could be taken only by the General Assembly. Consequently, paragraph 7 of document A/C.5/46/83 did not appear justified at the present juncture.

18. Mr. BAUDOT (Acting Controller) said that, as members of the Committee were perfectly aware, the statements of programme budget implications were intended only as a guide, and the recommendations of the Advisory Committee and the criteria set by the Fifth Committee were always taken into account. It was, however, true that document A/C.5/46/83 was not as clear as it might have been.

19. In reply to the various questions and requests for clarification, he pointed out that, in the first place, if the Committee approved the Advisory Committee's recommendation, that did not mean that it would be reducing the budget for section 18 or increasing the budget for section 14. Nor would it be agreeing to a transfer of resources from one section to another. The Fifth Committee would simply be pointing out that the General Assembly resolution could have the financial implications set out in the Secretary-General's statement. In any case, the financial implications which actually ensued would appear in the performance reports of the programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993.

20. In the second place, the conference-servicing costs for the new structure, calculated on a full-cost basis, would be lower than those required by the existing structure. Furthermore, the purpose of draft resolution A/46/L.57/Rev.1 was not to cut expenditure, but rather to improve the machinery. The statement of programme budget implications had been submitted with that in mind. Thirdly, the restructuring in question would in no way affect the execution of existing mandates, whether for activities under section 18 of the budget adopted in December 1991 or for activities deriving

(Mr. Baudot)

from other resolutions already adopted by the General Assembly in the field of science and technology for development.

21. Turning to more practical matters, the meeting to be held in Burundi in May would undoubtedly be a meeting of experts. However, its tasks in connection with the preparation of the work of the new Commission would be similar to those of the Advisory Committee on Science and Technology for Development. It was very likely that the cost of the meeting, which would be in the region of $100,000, would be lower than that of the Advisory Committee's meetings. It would be up to the Economic and Social Council to decide when in 1993 the new Commission should meet. It might be advisable for it to meet at the beginning of the year or in sufficient time to enable it to take the necessary decisions concerning the establishment of and arrangements for the ad hoc panels/workshops. The financial aspects of the question, in the context of the appropriations already approved for section 18 of the programme budget, would be specified in the second performance report of the programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993.

22. The idea that the restructured Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy should meet during the biennium 1994-1995 was based on the fact that the existing Committee had held a session in February 1992 and on the assumption that the Committee should meet every two years. It was true that the General Assembly could decide that the Committee should meet in 1993, but in that case additional resources would be required for the programme budget. For those reasons, document A/C.5/46/83 made no reference to fresh appropriations for the new Committee.

23. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) asked whether the ad hoc panels/workshops could hold their meetings wherever they wished, or whether they would be subject to the general rules requiring bodies to meet at their respective headquarters.

24. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), in connection with the remarks made by the representative of Uganda, and in confirmation of the statement by the Acting Controller, said that the Advisory Committee was not recommending either a reduction in the appropriation under section 18 or an increase in the appropriation under section 14. Any financial implications of the decision to be taken by the General Assembly on draft resolution A/46/L.57/Rev.1 would be indicated by the Secretary-General in the performance report. The points raised in the statement were indicative in nature only and not binding.

25. Mr. RAE (India) noted that the travel expenses and daily subsistence allowances of members of the Advisory Committee on Science and Technology for Development and the four working groups had been met from the regular budget; that the statement of programme budget implications currently included a figure of only $175,000 for the Commission on Science and Technology for Development. That was $231,000 less than the provision which had been made earlier; it was shown as a saving and might appear in the first performance

(Mr. Rae, India)

report of the programme budget; he wondered whether that amount would be available in 1993 for the ad hoc panels/workshops to be set up after the first session of the new functional commission.

26. Mr. BAUDOT (Acting Controller) replied that the adoption of the draft resolution would not affect the budget for section 18. In fact, it was being proposed, within the framework of section 18, that the appropriations should be used to finance the meeting of the groups of experts in Burundi in May. There would be opportunities to put forward recommendations and adopt decisions concerning the overall level of the budget for section 18, inter alia in connection with the first performance report of the programme budget. In reply to the question by the representative of the United States of America, at the present time he could not say for certain whether the headquarters rule would apply to the meetings of the groups of experts.

27. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the principle on which the headquarters rule was based was that an organ serviced by a secretariat should meet in the place in which its secretariat was based. Ad hoc panels and workshops did not have secretariats servicing them on an exclusive basis and, accordingly, had no headquarters location. Their meetings were convened by the Secretary-General in accordance with instructions from the General Assembly or at his discretion concerning the best means of implementing the programme of activities authorized by the General Assembly. Accordingly, the Secretary-General could decide to convene such meetings in the venue he deemed appropriate, in the case in point, in Burundi. An agreement had been concluded between the United Nations and the Government of Burundi to hold the meeting in that country.

28. Mr. CLAVIJO (Colombia) said that the estimated cost of meetings of the Committee on Natural Resources was $147,000, but it was not certain that the calculations concerning possible changes to the Commission on Science and Technology for Development were accurate. Given the uncertainty surrounding the figures, he wondered whether paragraph 8 of document A/C.5/46/83 should be retained. Perhaps it could be replaced by a paragraph expressing the hope that there would be changes in the activities between sessions, but without giving any figures. In order to avoid confusion, it might be better to retain only the first sentence of paragraph 9 of the document.

29. Mr. BAUDOT (Acting Controller) said that the text which the Committee would recommend for adoption by the General Assembly would be that proposed by the Chairman of the Advisory Committee. Consequently, the question of whether or not specific paragraphs of the statement of programme budget implications should be retained did not arise.

30. Mr. GOMAA (Tunisia) asked how it would be possible to review the implementation of the programme during the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly in 1993, as stipulated in paragraph 10 of A/46/L.57/Rev.1, if the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development was not to meet during that year, as specified in paragraph 3 of document A/C.5/46/83.

31. Mr. BAUDOT (Acting Controller) replied that the "review" mentioned in paragraph 10 of document A/46/L.57/Rev.1 referred to the entire restructuring process and that "further steps" referred to restructuring in general. Since the original committee had met at the beginning of 1992 and it was hoped that the new Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development would meet every two years, it was assumed that the new committee would meet during the 1994-1995 biennium, subject to what was decided in that respect by the General Assembly.

32. Mr. GOMAA (Tunisia) expressed reservations about the Controller's interpretation; he felt that the "review" referred to the implementation of draft resolution A/46/L.57/Rev.1. Perhaps the Legal Counsel could be asked to give an opinion regarding the interpretation of paragraph 10, so as to help the General Assembly take an appropriate decision.

33. Mr. CONMY (Ireland) said that a legal opinion would not help since the question of the representative of Tunisia concerned the purpose of a resolution which was not legally binding, but merely represented the political will of the General Assembly. Moreover, it was for the General Assembly to decide when the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development would meet and to allocate the necessary additional resources; consequently, those questions would not affect the Committee's decision on financial implications.

34. The CHAIRMAN said that he agreed with the representative of Ireland and he called on the representative of Tunisia to join the consensus.

35. Mr. GOMAA (Tunisia) said that his delegation was not trying to block the consensus. Tunisia would be raising the question in the General Assembly and wished to do so in the Committee, because the General Assembly might send the draft resolution back to the Committee when the question of the interpretation of the financial implications arose if it was decided that the new Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development should meet in 1993. Tunisia would join the consensus, but would raise the question in the General Assembly.

36. The CHAIRMAN suggested that, on the basis of the statement on programme budget implications appearing in document A/C.5/46/83, and of the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, the Committee should inform the General Assembly that, should it adopt draft resolution A/46/L.57/Rev.1, additional resource requirements under section 14 and estimated savings under section 18 would be reflected in the first performance report of the programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993.

37. Mr. INOMATA (Japan) asked the Committee to take into account his delegation's suggestion that the Committee should endorse the arrangements suggested by the Advisory Committee regarding the travel and subsistence entitlements of representatives attending meetings.

38. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that, so as to take into account the proposal made by the representative of Japan, the Committee, if it wished, could accept the Chairman's suggestion, which was not at variance with that of Japan, and that an additional line could then be added indicating that the Committee endorsed the comments and recommendations of the Advisory Committee, given that the text would subsequently be issued as an official document of the General Assembly. The Fifth Committee would indicate its endorsement of the comments and recommendations of the ACABQ on the basis of the clarification that, for the time being, no recommendation was being made for any decrease or increase in resources under sections 14 and 18.

39. Mr. CLAVIJO (Colombia) asked whether the Chairman's proposal could be amended; instead of referring to estimated "savings" under section 18, he would prefer to say estimated "changes", or some similar word, so as not to prejudge possible developments in the area of science and technology.

40. Mr. KINCHEN (United Kingdom) said that if the word "changes" was used in one section, it should also be used in the other sections; otherwise the text would be less clear, even if its substance was unchanged.

41. Mr. INOMATA (Japan) suggested that the Committee should use the standard formula, namely that the Committee recommended that the Assembly concur with the observations and recommendations of the Advisory Committee.

42. Mr. ETUKET (Uganda) asked the Chairman to read out the exact text that was to be adopted and expressed the hope that no interpretation would be given of the draft resolutions. For example, his delegation had its own interpretation of document A/46/L.57/Rev.1 but did not feel that it was the time to raise such questions.

43. The CHAIRMAN read out the text of his proposal, namely that the Fifth Committee should inform the General Assembly that, should it adopt draft resolution A/46/L.57/Rev.1, resource requirements under section 14 (Department of Technical Cooperation for Development) and estimates under section 18 (Centre for Science and Technology for Development) would be reflected in the budget performance reports for the biennium 1992-1993; and should recommend to the General Assembly that it concur with the observations and recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. If there was no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt the text.

44. It was so decided.

45. Mr. RAE (India) said that had he had an opportunity to speak before the text read out by the Chairman was approved, he would have firmly supported Colombia's proposal. He also wished to know exactly which were the observations and recommendations of the Advisory Committee referred to in the text adopted.

46. The CHAIRMAN said that the statement made by the Chairman of the Advisory Committee at the beginning of the meeting would be published and circulated shortly. He hoped that that would meet the needs of the representative of India.

47. Mr. SEBURYAMO (Burundi) confirmed that his Government was prepared to organize the meeting of the group of experts in May 1992, as planned. The preparations were well advanced. Burundi would remain in close contact with the Secretariat to finalize the details of the preparations. The meeting was of interest not only for Burundi itself, but also for most of the least developed countries.

48. Mr. SY (Senegal) endorsed the comments made by the representative of Burundi on the importance of the meeting of the group of experts. With regard to the text that had been adopted, he reiterated that the General Assembly should in no way be encouraged to reduce, even experimentally, the estimates under section 18. For countries like Senegal it was very important that the mandates under that section of the budget should be fully implemented. Colombia's proposal was therefore excellent.

49. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee had completed its consideration of item 107.

OTHER MATTERS

50. Mr. BAUDOT (Acting Controller) said that, with regard to items 109 (Current financial crisis of the United Nations) and 110 (Financial emergency of the United Nations), document A/46/600/Add.1 had been considered during the forty-sixth session but that no decision had been taken; he suggested that it should not be taken up in the immediate future because the Secretariat, and he himself, wished to reflect more fully on the proposals made in the Secretary-General's document. He hoped that the document would be taken up again after the end of May. However, the decision to postpone the consideration of the document did not in any way mean that the financial situation of the United Nations had improved. Thirty-five Member States had paid their contributions to the regular budget of the United Nations for 1992. Arrears in respect of that budget amounted to a little over $1,000 million. The situation with regard to the budget for peace-keeping operations had not improved either: those arrears came to some $600 million. The proposals regarding the budget for peace-keeping operations in Cambodia would be submitted to the Advisory Committee and to the Fifth Committee as soon as possible, in the first fortnight of May at the latest. Of the $200 million approved by the General Assembly for launching those operations, some $150 million had yet to be received.

51. The CHAIRMAN made a farewell statement to members of the Committee.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.